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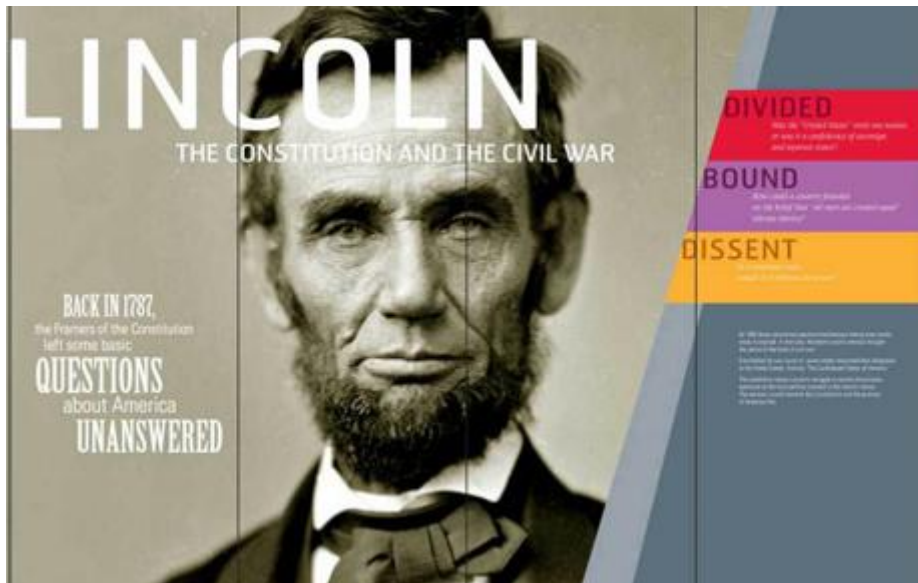
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National Exhibition on Lincoln's Legacy Kicks Off at RWU on Sept. 23

Traveling exhibition will make a stop at RWU to explore the complex Constitutional issues President Abraham Lincoln faced during the Civil War



September 16, 2014 | Jill Rodrigues '05

BRISTOL, R.I. – With a country divided over the issue of slavery and torn apart by civil war in the 1860s, Abraham Lincoln faced an extraordinary test as President of the United States. A national traveling exhibition coming to Roger Williams University will examine the difficult decisions that confronted President Lincoln – whether to adhere to executive constraints within the Constitution or flex his powers as Commander-in-Chief to ensure that America continued to live up to the ideals of liberty and equality for all.

From Sept. 23 to Oct. 31, Roger Williams will host the special exhibition focusing on Lincoln and the complex Constitutional issues that emerged during this pivotal time in American history. Featuring digital replicas of original documents – such as a draft of Lincoln's first inaugural address, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment, as well as images and portraits from the Civil War era – *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War* will be on display during library hours in the University's Mary Tefft White Cultural Center.

The exhibition is organized by the [National Constitution Center](#) and the [American Library Association](#), and made possible by the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#).

Presented through the lens of how Lincoln interpreted the Constitution, the exhibition explores what the 16th president thought about secession, slavery and wartime civil liberties. It offers a look at Lincoln as a man and president; showcases some of his strong actions as chief executive, including his decisions to enact martial law and authorize money to equip troops prior to congressional approval; and examines the Emancipation Proclamation and Thirteenth Amendment, which he believed were his greatest legacy. ([View a video tour of the exhibit led by the curator.](#))

In addition to displaying *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*, the University Library – one of only 200 libraries to host this exhibition commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War – has partnered with academic departments across campus to offer a series of faculty lectures, performances, student projects and a special viewing of the exhibit featuring re-enactors telling stories of the Civil War that will compliment the main exhibition.

“Visitors will leave the exhibition with a more complete understanding of Lincoln as president and the Civil War as the nation’s gravest constitutional crisis,” University Library Dean Peter Deekle says. “This exhibition, along with the lectures, performances and discussions designed to enhance its themes, offers a unique opportunity to delve deeply into major issues that continue to be significant in contemporary American society, including race, civil liberty and presidential authority.”

On Tuesday, Sept. 23 at 4:30 p.m., a grand opening and keynote presentation featuring retired R.I. Supreme Court Chief Justice Frank J. Williams will be held in the University Library’s Mary Tefft White Cultural Center. Williams will deliver a lecture titled, “Justice: Comparing President Abraham Lincoln and Chief Justice Roger B. Taney,” exploring the contentious relationship and opposing beliefs between the two officials wielding executive and judicial powers at the time. The grand opening will also feature the RWU chorus, singing songs of the Civil War period, with a reception to follow the lecture.

The exhibition and all events are free and open to the public. No tickets are required.